

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-07

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C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 1961

LIMDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y FOR EO, TAGS AND SUBJECT LINE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PDIP PDEV EAID BG US PEPR
SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH PRESIDENT ZIA AT CREDENTIALS CEREMONY

1. WHILE I DO NOT PLAN TO DO ANY DETAILED REPORTING ON MY INITIAL DISCUSSIONS HERE UNTIL I HAVE BEEN HERE A WHILE LONGER, MY FIRST TALK WITH PRESIDENT ZIA SEEMS WORTH REPORTING BRIEFLY SINCE IT TURNED OUT TO BE CONSIDERABLY MORE THAN THE USUAL PROTOCOL SESSION. THAT ZIA SPENT FORTY-FIVE MINUTES WITH ME -- ONE OF HIS STAFF MEMBERS SAID THIS WAS THE LONGEST HE HAD SPENT WITH ANY NEW AMBASSADOR -- IS AN INDICATION OF THE VALUE HE PUTS ON THE BENEFITS WHICH COME (OR WHICH HE HOPES WILL COME) FROM HIS RELATIONS WITH THE U.S.

2. MOST OF HIS PRESENTATION WAS A COOL AND RATIONAL PITCH FOR CONTINUED U.S. SUPPORT TO BANGLADESHI DEVELOPMENT.
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HE COVERED THE WATERFRONT, INCLUDING MANY AREAS IN WHICH WE ARE ACTIVELY ENGAGED. HE MADE IT CLEAR THAT HIS PRIORITIES WERE ON AGRICULTURE AND FAMILY PLANNING AND THAT HE THOUGHT THAT BANGLADESH WAS AT LAST BEGINNING TO MAKE PROGRESS. HE MENTIONED THEIR NEED FOR FOOD IN A WAY WHICH SUGGESTED WHEN WE GET TOGETHER AGAIN, AS WE AGREED TO DO, THAT HE WILL ASK FOR MORE. (WORLD BANK

VICE PRESIDENT HOPPER TOLD ME JUST BEFORE LEAVING DACCA LAST WEEK THAT HE STRONGLY HOPED THE U.S. WOULD CONTRIBUTE A LARGER PORTION (40 PERCENT) OF BANGLADESH'S ESTIMATE OF ITS IMPORT REQUIREMENTS FOR NEXT YEAR OF 1.2 MILLION TONS. HIS ARGUMENT WAS IN LARGE PART POLITICAL, I.E., THAT WE SHOULD BE SYMPATHETIC TO BANGLADESH'S OWN ESTIMATE OF ITS IMPORT REQUIREMENTS DURING AN ELECTION YEAR AND IN VIEW OF THE IMPORTANCE OF POLITICAL STABILITY FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.)

3. THE PRESIDENT ALLUDED TO THE NEED FOR DOMESTIC STABILITY IF DEVELOPMENT IS TO BE ACHIEVED AND REMARKED ON HOW IMPORTANT IT WAS THAT HIS POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM SUCCEED ("FAILURE WOULD MEAN THE END OF EVERYTHING"). HE SAID THAT THIS REQUIRED PATIENCE AS THERE WERE ACTING AGAINST HIM FOR THEIR PERSONAL BENEFIT. I INFER FROM THIS THAT NOW THAT HE IS GETTING DEEP INTO HIS POLITICAL PLAN, POLITICAL REQUIREMENTS WILL BECOME MORE AND MORE IMPORTANT RELATIVE TO THE PURELY ECONOMIC.

4. ZIA ALSO EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF REGIONAL STABILITY FOR HIS DOMESTIC PLANS. HE SPOKE OF HIS GOOD RELATIONS WITH PAKISTAN, NEPAL AND INDIA (MENTIONING THE FARAKKA AGREEMENT WITH PRIDE). HE NEVERTHELESS CLAIMED (AS I AM TOLD HE HAS PREVIOUSLY) THAT DISSIDENTS IN TWO AREAS OF BANGLADESH WERE STILL GETTING HELP (ARMS OF

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INDIAN ORIGIN) FROM ACROSS THE BORDER IN INDIA, PERHAPS FROM LOCAL OFFICIALS WHO HAD A STAKE IN THE POLICY OF THE PREVIOUS INDIAN GOVERNMENT. HE SAID THAT HE HAD MOST RECENTLY RAISED THIS ISSUE WITH MORARJI DESAI DURING A PLEASANT LUNCH IN AUSTRALIA AND THAT DESAI HAD REPLIED THAT HE WOULD RE-ISSUE THE ORDER THAT SUCH ASSISTANCE SHOULD STOP.

5. ZIA SPOKE MOST WARMLY OF THE U.S., EXPRESSING GREAT APPRECIATION FOR OUR ASSISTANCE AND SAYING THAT WE WERE BANGLADESH'S MOST IMPORTANT FRIEND. HE PARTICULARLY ASKED THAT I CONVEY HIS GREETINGS TO PRESIDENT CARTER, SAYING THAT HE HAD NOT YET MET THE PRESIDENT BUT THAT HE HAS HAD AN EXCELLENT CORRESPONDENCE WITH HIM. (HIS DESCRIPTION AT THIS POINT IN THE CONVERSATION OF THE LEADERS HE HAS MET ON HIS TRAVELS ELSEWHERE MADE HIS DESIRE TO MEET THE PRESIDENT CLEAR BUT NOT IN SUCH A WAY THAT I HAD TO REPLY.)

6. MY IMPRESSION OF THE PRESIDENT WAS MUCH THE SAME AS THAT OF MY PREDECESSORS. HE IS A SOFT-SPOKEN, CONFIDENT AND ATTRACTIVE ADVOCATE OF THE DEVELOPMENT HIS COUNTRY MOST NEEDS. THAT THERE IS ANOTHER FIRM AND SOMETIMES

HARSH SIDE TO HIS PERSONALITY WE KNOW FROM WHAT WE
HEAR FROM HIS SUBORDINATES AND FROM THE MANNER IN WHICH
HE DELT WITH THE MUTINY AGAINST HIM. I CANNOT EXPLAIN
HIS CONTINUED BELIEF THAT DISSIDENTS ARE STILL GETTING
HELP FROM ACROSS THE BORDER AS HIS SUBORDINATES STOPPED
MAKING ALLEGATIONS SUCH AS THIS SOME TIME AGO.
SCHNEIDER

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